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Sustainable development and international economic cooperation: women in development

The empowerment of women and integration of gender perspectives in the promotion of economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 56/188 of 21 December 2001, examines the attention paid at recent United Nations conferences and summits to the concerns of women and gender equality goals in the context of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the promotion of economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development. The report also focuses on the utilization of existing planning and reporting mechanisms to promote, facilitate and monitor progress in the empowerment of women and the integration of gender perspectives in development at national levels, in follow-up to global commitments.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 56/188 of 21 December 2001, the General Assembly reaffirmed that gender equality is of fundamental importance for achieving sustained economic growth and sustainable development and that investing in the development of women and girls has a multiplier effect, in particular on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth. The Assembly recognized that, although globalization and liberalization processes have created employment opportunities for women in many countries, they have made women, especially in the developing and least developed countries, more vulnerable to problems caused by increased economic volatility. The Assembly recommended increasing women's access to: economic and financial resources; decision-making positions at all levels; education and training; as well as access to and full participation in information and communication technologies (ICT). The Assembly urged Governments to develop and promote methodologies for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all aspects of policy-making, including economic policy-making. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on progress in the implementation of resolution 56/188.

2. Consideration of women in development within the framework of the General Assembly's work on economic and financial matters has provided an opportunity to highlight current and emerging issues and trends requiring action at the national, regional and international levels to ensure the full and effective participation of women in planning, implementing and monitoring development policies and programmes. Gender perspectives on issues such as macroeconomic policy-making, trade liberalization and resource allocation have been identified and addressed.

3. The most recent report on women in development, submitted to the General Assembly in 2001, focused on access to financial resources from a gender perspective. Women's access to bank financing, microcredit, equity financing and savings and insurance services were assessed. A number of recommendations on improving women's equal access to financial resources were provided. In view of the accelerating changes in the global economy, the report recommended that all aspects of financing for development be examined from a gender perspective.

4. Since the General Assembly's consideration of women in development in 2001, two major United Nations conferences have addressed gender perspectives within the frameworks of financing for development and sustainable development: the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002; and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002. The upcoming conference on the World Summit on the Information Society (to be held at Geneva in 2003 and in Tunisia in 2005) will provide an opportunity to address the issue of gender equality and ICT for development. Gender perspectives should be fully integrated into all follow-up to and implementation of the outcomes of these conferences, as well as the Millennium Declaration. The centrality of women's contributions, and their priorities and needs, should be highlighted in these processes and gender-sensitive national policies and programmes should be developed in all areas.

5. The present report examines the attention paid at recent United Nations conferences and summits and in preparation for the forthcoming summit on ICT to women's concerns and gender equality goals in the context of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the promotion of economic growth, poverty

eradication and sustainable development. The report also focuses on the utilization of existing planning and reporting mechanisms to promote, facilitate and monitor progress in the integration of gender perspectives in development at national levels, in follow up to global commitments.

II. Progress towards women's empowerment and integration in development

6. Inequalities that impede women's empowerment and their full participation in development, including in economic development, persist worldwide. In no region of the world are women equal to men in legal, social and economic rights.[1] In all societies, gender relations play a key role in the division of labour, income, wealth, education, public goods and services. Gender gaps in access to and control over resources such as land and credit, in economic opportunities and in power and political voice are widespread. Resource allocation is often gender-biased within households as well as in the context of local and national budgets. Gender bias can be perpetuated through macroeconomic policies, trade policies and labour-market policies.[2]

7. Income disparities, labour market discrimination, high unemployment and high incidence of poverty among women persist in both developed and developing countries.[3] In many countries women continue to have less access to productive resources and social services than men, and girls are less likely to attend school than boys in low-income countries.[4] These inequalities are obstacles to economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

8. Despite the progress made in terms of women's increased participation in the labour force, women still have unequal opportunities in gaining access to formal and well-remunerated work. The informal sector represents a more important source of employment for women than for men in most of the countries where data is available.[5] Women have suffered disproportionately from the slowdown of the global economy in terms of job losses and a shift to more precarious forms of employment, which has led to a lowering of average wages in areas where women occupy jobs previously filled by men.[6] Many women have become more vulnerable to poverty, particularly in countries where the burden of family subsistence and caring for the sick has increased dramatically as a result of HIV/AIDS.

9. Women's access to and ownership of land is pivotal to sustainable livelihoods. Recent figures from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) show that, despite their active participation in agricultural work, women have limited access to land and credit. Fewer than 10 per cent of women farmers in India, Nepal and Thailand own land. An analysis of credit schemes in five African countries found that women received less than 10 per cent of the credit awarded to male smallholders. Only 15 per cent of the world's agricultural extension agents are women.[7]

10. Serious gender inequalities persist in relation to economic policies and programmes and in access to political and economic decision-making. The underrepresentation of women in political decision-making at all levels is a continuing concern in many parts of the world. While women have the right to vote in almost all countries in the world, they women continue to experience difficulties

in exercising this right. Currently, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments stands at 15.2 per cent.[8] There is little systematic data collection on women's representation at different levels of government and in economic decision-making bodies.

11. Violence against women continues to be a major human rights concern and an obstacle to sustainable development. Trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation is one of the fastest growing areas of organized crime. Trafficked women and girls are subject to violence and serious violations of their human rights. In situations of armed conflict and their aftermath, women and girls are vulnerable to all forms of violence, particularly sexual violence and exploitation.

III. The contribution of global conferences and summits

12. United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Summit, have been instrumental in highlighting the cross-cutting nature of gender issues and their relevance for sustainable development, including economic growth and poverty eradication. Commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality have been made by Governments and recommendations for action at international, regional and national levels adopted. Greater attention has to be given to enhancing the implementation of the policies, norms and recommendations already in place, and to monitoring progress.

A. Millennium Declaration

13. The United Nations Millennium Declaration,[9] adopted at the Millennium Summit on 8 September 2000, embodies the common vision of the Member States of the United Nations for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.[10] In the Millennium Declaration, the international community reiterated the commitments made at the global conferences in the 1990s to improve the lives of all human beings in the new millennium and focused attention on implementation of those commitments through the establishment of measurable targets.

14. The Millennium Declaration recognized the need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate truly sustainable development. Gender equality is viewed not only as an important development goal in and of itself, but also as critical to the achievement of other development goals. The importance of ensuring the equal human rights of women and men and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was also highlighted in the Declaration.

15. Eight Millennium Development Goals were formulated to facilitate achievement of the commitments in the Millennium Declaration, focusing on: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development. Targets and indicators were established to monitor progress towards the achievement of the commitments made.

16. The specific Millennium Development Goal on gender equality aims to promote gender equality and empower women, with the explicit target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015. The four indicators to measure the achievement of the goal focus on the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; the ratio of literate females to males, 15 to 24 years of age; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. Progress towards achieving the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women should be assessed in relation to each of the other Millennium Development Goals, which are mutually reinforcing. Success in other development goals will have positive impacts on gender equality just as progress towards gender equality will help further the achievement of other goals. Gender perspectives need to be explicitly outlined in discussions of poverty and hunger, education, maternal and child mortality, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, environmental sustainability and partnerships for development.

17. The first report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/57/270 and Corr.1) indicated that the prospects for meeting the commitments and targets, given the current trends, were mixed, with marked differences between and within regions. The report noted that gender inequalities at all levels of education continued to hinder economic development and social equity. While women had made some gains in wage employment, gender inequalities in relation to political power remained problematic, as reflected in the low levels of representation of women in parliaments. In relation to maternal mortality, in the two regions with the highest rates, sub-Saharan Africa and south-central Asia, insignificant progress had been made to reach the target by 2015.

B. International Conference on Financing for Development

18. The International Conference on Financing for Development was the first United Nations-sponsored summit to address key financial and related issues pertaining to global development in an integrated way. Five financial mechanisms to provide resources for development were examined: domestic resource mobilization, foreign direct investment (FDI), trade, debt, and official development assistance (ODA). Systemic issues and institutional arrangements to enhance the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financing and trading systems in support of development, were also addressed. The outcome of the International Conference, the Monterrey Consensus,[11] established a platform for a new global alliance for development, encompassing all relevant actors at the global, regional and national levels.[12]

19. There is increasing recognition that financing for development must address both economic and social development issues. The neglect of the social outcomes, including gender implications, of macroeconomic policies has a broad negative impact on the development processes, making such policies less encompassing, less participatory, less sustainable and indifferent to social costs of economic growth.[13] Economists increasingly recognize that gender analysis of macroeconomic policies, including taxation, trade, investment and financial policies, is necessary to ensure mobilization of resources to meet the needs and priorities of all the poor, including women.

20. The Monterrey Consensus called for mainstreaming a gender perspective into development policies at all levels and in all sectors in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the global economic system's support for development. It recognized that gender equality is one of the essential elements of good governance and that empowerment of women is a priority in economic development. The Consensus called for gender-sensitive investments in basic economic and social infrastructure in recognition of the importance of social and economic aspects in combating poverty and ensuring sustainable development. It also stressed the importance of microfinance and credit schemes and advocated gender-budget policies.

21. Participants at the multi-stakeholder round tables organized at the International Conference on Financing for Development expressed the view that insufficient attention had been paid to social issues such as gender mainstreaming and noted that the Monterrey Consensus could have been more explicit in addressing the social agenda and the financing of social programmes, particularly in the rural sector.[14] The recommendations on gender equality in the Monterrey Consensus are mainly provided in the context of domestic mobilization of financial resources for development. While all of the references and recommendations on gender equality in the Consensus are critical, it is equally important to identify and address the gender perspectives in international policies and programmes, including on trade and ODA. Microfinance initiatives are important measures for increasing women's access to resources, but they do not, in and of themselves, remove the obstacles women face in securing full access to resources and markets. The mainstreaming of gender perspectives into budget processes at the local and national level is a critical strategy for: furthering economic democracy, transparency and accountability; ensuring the policy commitments are matched by resources; and empowering women. Addressing macroeconomic policies and land reform from a gender perspective is also essential for women's empowerment and economic independence and productivity.

22. Research has shown that economic development policies that do not take gender perspectives into account, combined with the underrepresentation of women in economic decision-making, can exacerbate gender inequalities and hinder economic growth. A more comprehensive analysis of the gender perspectives of macroeconomic frameworks is required. Globalization, especially its trade liberalization and privatization aspects, has differential impacts on women and men, affecting, in particular, the sustainable livelihoods of women in rural areas. While some women have benefited from new opportunities provided by globalization processes, in many cases the shift to cash crop production from subsistence agriculture has had negative effects on access to resources and services and household food security, which have disproportionately affected rural women. The privatization of services can also lead to job losses, particularly for women. Higher prices for services can result in heavier burdens , especially for poor households. The differential effects of import liberalization and export promotion on women and men in terms of level of job security, earnings and employment conditions also need to be considered.

23. The follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development, which focuses on increased cooperation among the international financial institutions, the United Nations system and other major actors in the field of development, must address these remaining challenges to the integration of gender

perspectives in financing for development. Follow-up meetings, such as the high-level meetings of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, could include a focus on identifying and addressing gender perspectives in all areas discussed.

24. The special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization in April 2003, one year after the adoption of the Monterrey Consensus, focused on increased coherence, coordination and cooperation for its implementation at all levels. Some participants stressed that the cross-cutting nature of human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women should be recognized as critical to the achievement of all development goals. The importance of improved access to credit, including microcredit, to the realization of the entrepreneurial capacities of men and women was raised. Participants also pointed to the need to incorporate human rights, environmental and gender perspectives into trade policies.[15]

C. World Summit on Sustainable Development

25. Since the holding of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the adoption of Agenda 21 in 1992, the concept of sustainable development has increasingly integrated the three essential dimensions of development: economic development; social development; and environmental protection; including a strong focus on poverty eradication. The Johannesburg Declaration of the World Summit on Sustainable Development,[16] confirmed the commitment of Governments to ensure that women's empowerment, emancipation and gender equality are integrated into all activities encompassed within Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.[17] In the Plan of Implementation, it was recognized that the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit should benefit all, in particular women, youth, children and vulnerable groups. It further acknowledged that gender equality is among one of the elements that form the basis for sustainable development. This renewed commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality is important because of women's central role in social development, poverty eradication, natural resource management and their, often unrecognized, critical contributions to economic development at all levels.

26. To achieve the goal of poverty eradication, the need to promote women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making at all levels and to mainstream gender-perspectives in all policies and strategies was highlighted in the Plan of Implementation. It called for the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and the improvement of the status, health and economic welfare of women and girls through full and equal access to economic opportunity, land, credit, education and health-care services. It also called for access to agricultural resources for people living in poverty, especially women and indigenous communities, and for an increase in decent employment, credit and income for the urban poor through appropriate national policies promoting equal opportunities for women and men.

27. Among the measures recommended to change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production were actions to provide information for both men and women about available energy sources and technologies. With respect to promoting

and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development, specific attention was drawn to the issue of women and gender equality in a number of areas, including: water and sanitation; infrastructure and service development; rural development; agriculture; and nutrition and food security.

28. When addressing health and sustainable development, attention was focused on women in terms of, inter alia: the causes of ill health, including environmental causes; the impact on development; ensuring equal access to health-care services, giving particular attention to maternal and emergency obstetric care; promoting healthy living, including reproductive and sexual health; transfer and dissemination of technologies for safe water, sanitation and waste management for rural and urban areas; reduction of HIV/AIDS, reduction of respiratory diseases and other health impacts resulting from air pollution; and provision of affordable energy to rural communities.

29. In reviewing actions aimed at sustainable development, the Plan of Implementation specifically drew attention to: the promotion of gender equality in the African region when addressing the right to development; dealing effectively with natural disasters and conflicts, including their humanitarian and environmental impacts; and securing equitable access to land tenure, clarifying resource rights and responsibilities and providing access to credit.

30. In addressing internationally agreed development goals, steps were called for to avoid any unilateral measure that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular women and children. The Plan of Implementation reiterated the goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015, through gender mainstreaming and the creation of a gender-sensitive educational system. Further work on indicators for sustainable development by countries at the national level, including integration of gender aspects, was encouraged.

31. The Economic and Social Council was called on to intensify its efforts to ensure that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of its activities concerning the coordinated implementation of Agenda 21. At the national level, women's full and equal participation in policy formulation and decision-making was encouraged, as well as the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all activities designed to enhance national institutional arrangements for sustainable development, including at the local level.

32. A number of gender equality issues will require further attention in the follow-up to the World Summit. The continued lack of access by women to land and productive resources in rural areas remains a major obstacle to the achievement of sustainable development. In the process of implementation of the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation it will be important to incorporate gender perspectives into all strategies and action plans at both the national and international levels, in order that specific actions and/or targets on gender equality can be established.

33. The Commission on Sustainable Development, at its eleventh session in 2003, in outlining its future programme, organization and methods of work, recognized the need for gender balance in participation and the integration of gender aspects in the development of indicators and identified gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in

all thematic clusters in its work programme for 2004-2017. Within this context, the Commission can play a key role in ensuring that gender perspectives are taken into account in the implementation of the commitments made in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The preparations for the thematic cluster for 2004-2005 on water, sanitation and human settlements will be important for developing an effective approach for ensuring the gender equality concerns are fully integrated as a cross-cutting issue.

D. World Summit on the Information Society

34. In 2000, the Economic and Social Council adopted a ministerial communiqué on the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based economy. The Millennium Declaration emphasized the urgency of ensuring that the benefits of new technologies, especially ICT, be available to all. Little work had been done at the international level to understand the connection between ICT and gender equality before the Commission on the Status of Women considered the issue at its forty-seventh session in March 2003.

35. ICT provides unique opportunities for economic growth and human development and facilitates access to financial markets, improved employment opportunities and increased productivity. Recent research has shown that information and communication technologies are improving women's economic livelihoods by expanding access to local and international markets for women producers and traders and increasing access to jobs, education and training and entrepreneurial opportunities. Women are taking advantage of the increased flexibility in employment conditions to combine roles in the care economy with professional roles.[18]

36. However, while some women have gained access to ICT, and are using these technologies effectively, many women encounter socio-economic, cultural and political barriers that deny them the benefits of the new technologies, as well as opportunities for active participation in shaping the information society. These barriers have led to a gender divide within the existing digital divide between the developed and developing countries. Women can be excluded from participation in the information economy due to lower levels of education, high rates of illiteracy compared with men and lack of ICT training. Persistent cultural constraints, such as stereotypical views of the roles of men and women, and lack of proficiency in English the dominant language in the field of computer software, are also contributing factors that hamper women's full participation.

37. Occupational segregation exists within the ICT industry. Women tend to be concentrated in end-user, lower skilled and lowest paid jobs related to information processing, banking, insurance, printing and publishing, and in outsourced jobs for women in call centres, information services, data entry, geographical information systems and software programming. Women make up a small percentage of managerial, maintenance and design personnel in networks, operating systems and software. More women are becoming software programmers, but very few work in hardware design. Women have rarely reached high-level positions in information technology at the technical, managerial or decision-making levels.[19]

38. While ICT in and of themselves cannot create gender equality or end poverty, they can be powerful tools for positive social change towards gender equality.[20] The

integration of gender perspectives into policy and planning processes is critical for ensuring that gender disparities in the information age are addressed and that women are empowered to take full advantage of ICT. Most national ICT policies, plans and programmes have not paid attention to gender perspectives, and women's priorities and needs have not been considered.

39. The agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women[21] provide a set of actions and recommendations to improve women's access to and participation in information communication technologies. The agreed conclusions addressed women's equal access to ICT-based economic activities and employment, for example through telecentres, information centres and business incubators. The Commission stressed the importance of ICT for the economic, political and social empowerment of women as leaders, participants and consumers.

40. The World Summit on the Information Society, which is to be held at Geneva in 2003 and in Tunisia in 2005, aims to develop a common vision and understanding of the information society.[22] Gender perspectives should be integrated in all areas covered by the Summit. The agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on ICT were transmitted to the President of the Preparatory Committee and the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, with a view to ensuring attention to gender perspectives and a focus on gender equality in the Summit and its outcome. Gender-sensitive implementation of the outcome of the Summit will be critical in the pursuit of the gender equality goal in the field of ICT at the national level.

IV. Tools for accelerating the empowerment of women and the integration of gender perspectives in development

41. There is a renewed commitment to the implementation of internationally agreed goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of major conferences and summits. The goals and targets provide a comprehensive basis for action at the national, regional and international levels with the key objectives of poverty eradication and sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals reports at the country level, common country assessments, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and poverty reduction strategy papers have been identified as useful instruments for facilitating the coordinated and integrated implementation and monitoring of the internationally agreed goals and targets.

A. Millennium Development Goals reports at the country level

42. In an effort to assess implementation of the Millennium Declaration at the national level, national Governments are encouraged to prepare periodic reports on progress in achieving the goals and targets, in order to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the national strategies and United Nations support for those strategies. The Millennium Development Goals reports at the country level, which should build on existing planning and reporting mechanisms at national level, serve as benchmarks to analyse trends and to identify achievements, challenges and

obstacles on a country-by-country basis. The reports can be an important tool for awareness raising, advocacy, alliance building and developing national capacity for monitoring and reporting on goals and targets. The production of the reports can foster public debate at national and local levels on specific development priorities and can lead to policy reform, institutional changes and resource allocation. These reports can function as useful instruments for assessing the extent to which gender perspectives are taken into consideration in national development policies and plans.

43. An initial assessment of the available Millennium Development Goals reports[23] indicates that most countries reported on measures taken to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The focus on gender equality in the reports was, however, limited to specific sectors such as education and health, including HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, and, to a lesser extent, on the economy and political participation. The focus in the reports on macroeconomics issues did not adequately consider the impact on women and gender equality.

44. In relation to Millennium Development Goal 3, on gender equality and empowerment of women, the majority of the reports indicated that equal access to education was a priority, with most countries presenting comprehensive policies and programmes aimed at achieving universal primary education for boys and girls. A few countries broadened the focus to include not only education but also measures to achieve gender equality in other areas, such as the economy, the judiciary and political decision-making.

45. Countries reported a lack of data on gender equality in key areas, as well as gaps in the availability of data disaggregated by sex, which hinder effective follow-up of national policies and programmes from a gender perspective. Constraints faced in relation to data collection and analysis and the need for assistance in this area were raised.

B. Common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework

46. The common country assessment (CCA) is a common instrument of the United Nations system, used to analyse the status of national development and to identify key development challenges. The assessment takes into account national priorities, within the framework of the goals, commitments and targets of the Millennium Declaration and international conferences and summits. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process provides an integrated United Nations system response to national priorities and needs.

47. A number of assessments of gender perspectives in CCAs and UNDAFs revealed that efforts have been made to address gender issues in these processes, but there have been constraints and challenges.[24] Analyses and recommendations contained in the CCA/UNDAFs reviewed tended to focus on women's concerns in education, health and the microeconomy. Economic policies and programmes, for example in finance, taxation, industry and formal and informal sector employment, rarely reflected gender perspectives. Critical areas for women, agriculture, livestock and animal husbandry, transport, water, environment and housing, were not adequately addressed from a gender perspective.

48. While many of the CCA/UNDAFs assessed did make reference to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, few explicitly defined how issues emanating from these processes were taken into account in the analyses and strategies. In the CCA/UNDAFs reviewed, there were no specific references to the national action plans and strategies for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, developed after the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and updated for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000.

49. Many CCA/UNDAFs referred to the feminization of poverty and women's vulnerability without further gender analysis or recommendations for actions. The challenges facing women, such as the impoverishment of many women and the inequalities they face in relation to human rights, participation and decision-making, were recognized. However, the underlying causes of gender inequality and women's vulnerability were often not analysed and actions to address the situation were not formulated.

50. It was noted that where gender equality goals are explicit in national strategies and plans they are more likely to be addressed in CCA/UNDAFs. The lack of sex-disaggregated data was highlighted as a constraint, as well as the fact that much of the data available was considerably out of date. While the national machineries for women participated in thematic working groups and workshops, the effectiveness of participation varied. Many of the national machineries required capacity-building on gender mainstreaming in order to make effective contributions.

C. Poverty reduction strategy papers

51. Poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPS) provide an overview of a country's economic and social policies and programmes to promote economic growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated external financing needs. PRSPs are prepared by Governments through a participatory process involving civil society and development partners, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). PRSPs assist Governments in identifying economic and social policies that promote economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

52. Efforts have been made by the United Nations specialized agencies, the World Bank and bilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to facilitate consideration of women's concerns and gender perspectives in the PRSP processes. A number of reviews of PRSPs from a gender perspective have been carried out. In 2001, the World Bank carried out an assessment of gender mainstreaming in the PRSPs because of evidence that gender-based inequalities slow economic growth and poverty reduction and tend to be most extreme in the lowest income countries and poorest households.[25] Nineteen interim PRSPs and four full PRSPs were examined to determine the degree to which gender issues were included in the four core elements of the PRSPs (diagnosis; public actions; monitoring; and consultative process) and in the areas of health, nutrition and population; education; labour markets; agriculture; safety nets; infrastructure; governance; and financial services.

53. The review indicated that, in general, the integration of gender perspectives into the PRSP process had been minimal. Although a number of interim and completed PRSPs treated gender issues in specific areas in some depth, the overall

coverage was weak and there were many missed opportunities for enhancing poverty reduction. Gender issues in productive activities (agriculture, financial services, labour markets and infrastructure); safety nets, governance and legal issues were rarely addressed. Few interim PRSPs included specific plans for gender analysis or for gender-inclusive consultations.

54. Another study on PRSPs in March 2003,[28] found that gender equality was not considered seriously as a determinant of poverty, although differentials in access of women and men to economic and social services were discussed in all the PRSPs analysed. The PRSPs did not taken into account many of the key priorities of women, such as maternal health services, support for food production and marketing within the country and eradication of gender discriminatory practices within social services and economic infrastructure. The PRSPs focused on the market economy without recognition of the gender implications and the household economy, which is of critical importance for women, was neglected. The sections of the PRSPs outlining gender-specific indicators for monitoring implementation were weak.

55. The study found that civil society involvement, including women's groups and networks, in the preparation of the PRSPs was limited. Time was insufficient to allow for development of PRSPs based on gender-sensitive data collection and analysis of poverty, or to initiate consultation with a wide range of civil society actors, including women's groups and networks. Although the process of consultation had often failed to take into consideration the barriers to women's effective involvement, NGOs advocating for gender had the biggest impact on the PRSP processes reviewed. National machineries for women were involved in PRSPs to varying degrees.

56. Efforts were being made by NGOs, women's national machineries and donor agencies to address these weaknesses in the PRSP process, including broadening the debate on what constitutes poverty to incorporate a more gender-sensitive diagnosis and allow for a better understanding of the differences in the causes and nature of, and impact of poverty on, men and women. Other positive follow-up activities have included gender analysis of completed PRSPs and the development of tools for mainstreaming in future PRSPs.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

57. **There is increased recognition that the achievement of development goals, including in economic development, is contingent on the full participation of women as well as men and the identification of gender perspectives in all areas and at all levels. Recent United Nations conferences and summits have made some progress in integrating women's concerns and gender perspectives into the preparatory processes and final outcomes. The significant contributions of women to development, as well as their priorities, constraints and needs, have been highlighted in these processes. Gender perspectives in many areas are still, however, not sufficiently identified and addressed.**

58. **Because of continuing inequalities and discrimination, women are in extremely vulnerable situations in many parts of the world, as demonstrated by the level of violence against women, trafficking in women and girls, the impact of armed conflict on women and the continued predominance of women among the poorest of the poor. This should not mean, however, that women are only**

seen as victims and vulnerable groups. The specific vulnerabilities of women and girls need to be identified and addressed as abuses of women's human rights and constraints to sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development is dependent on the recognition of women as well as men as key actors and agents of change. The critical inputs of women in peace and security, poverty eradication, environmental protection and promoting democracy and effective governance must be recognized and actively promoted and facilitated.

59. Progress in bringing women's concerns and gender perspectives to the fore in global policy-making processes has to be translated into practical action at national levels. A strong focus on implementation of policies, norms and recommendations is required, utilizing, to the greatest extent possible, existing planning and monitoring mechanisms in a coordinated and integrated manner. Much remains to be done to ensure the empowerment of women and integration into development at the national level through effective, gender-sensitive policies and programmes.

60. The integration of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development is required, taking into account the contributions, priorities and needs of all stakeholders, including both women and men, through a consultative and participatory process. This approach would ensure a coordinated and integrated follow-up to major summits and conferences, with gains for the achievement of all development goals and targets, including those on women's empowerment and gender equality.

61. The General Assembly may wish to call on all relevant actors, Governments, the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, NGOs and civil society, to ensure:

(a) Increased consideration of gender perspectives in follow-up activities to the International Conference on Financing for Development, including the High-Level Dialogue of the General Assembly on Financing for Development, on 29 and 30 October 2003;

(b) Explicit incorporation of gender perspectives in all thematic clusters in the multiyear programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, including in relation to the thematic cluster for 2004-2005 on water, sanitation and human settlements;

(c) Explicit attention to monitoring of progress in empowering women and incorporating gender perspectives in all reports on implementation of commitments made in global conferences and summits;

(d) Attention to gender perspectives in all aspects of the preparations for and outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, to ensure that gender inequalities related to ICT are identified and addressed at the national level, and that women are empowered to take full advantage of ICT;

(e) More effective and integrated utilization of existing planning and monitoring instruments, such as the Millennium Development Goals reports at the country level, CCA/UNDAFs, national human development reports and PRSPs, to promote and monitor the empowerment of women and integration of gender perspectives in development processes and ensure explicit attention to gender perspectives in all reporting processes.

62. **The General Assembly may wish to encourage Governments, in collaboration with the United Nations, international and regional organizations, NGOs and civil society, to:**

(a) **Explicitly incorporate gender perspectives in their implementation strategies and action plans in follow-up to all United Nations global conferences and summits and develop gender-sensitive targets and indicators and effective monitoring mechanisms;**

(b) **Develop capacity-building in gender mainstreaming to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated into national policies and programmes in all areas;**

(c) **Take steps to ensure that data required for gender analysis is collected, that data is sex-disaggregated and that, in identifying and monitoring indicators and targets, gender perspectives are taken into consideration;**

(d) **Systematically involve the national machineries for women and utilize the existing national action plans and strategies for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in the preparation of Millennium Development Goals reports, CCAs/UNDAFs, national human development reports and PRSPs.**

Notes

[1] The World Bank, Gender and Development Group, *Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals*, 4 April 2003.

[2] Nilüfer Cağatay, *Trade, Gender and Poverty*, United Nations Development Programme, October 2001.

[3] *Report on the World Social Situation, 2001* (United Nations Sales publication, ST/ESA/277-E/2001/70).

[4] World Bank, 2002, *Engendering Development*.

[5] International Labour Office, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, Geneva 2002.

[6] United Nations, *Report on the World Social Situation, 2001* (see chapter on *Disparities in incomes and poverty*, para. 37).

[7] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Gender and Food Security: Agriculture, Facts and Figures*, Rome, 2003 (http://www.fao.org).

[8] Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in National Parliaments* (www.ipu.org) (updated 3 July 2003).

[9] Resolution 55/2.

[10] A/57/270 and Corr.1.

[11] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.11.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[12] A/57/344, para. 5.

[13] A/56/321, para. 7.

[14] A/57/344, para. 36.

[15] A/58/77-E/2003/62.

[16] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August to 4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[17] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

[18] E/CN.6/2003/6, para. 17.

[19] Ibid., para. 33.

[20] Ibid., para. 22.

[21] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 7* (E/2003/27), chap. I.A.III.

[22] Resolution 56/183.

[23] At the preparation of this report, 22 country reports were available. The reports were submitted during 2001, 2002 and 2003: Albania, Armenia, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Egypt, Guinea, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nepal, Philippines, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam.

[24] See, for example, *The gender perspective in the CCA/UNDAF and PRSP processes and priorities in West and Central Africa: an assessment report*, prepared for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) regional office in Abidjan, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Labour Organization (ILO) (undated); and the desk review, *Gender mainstreaming in the CCA and UNDAF process* (2003), which was commissioned by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender Mainstreaming in the CCA/UNDAF Process, of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality.

[25] World Bank, Gender and Development Group, *Gender in the PRSPs: A Stocktaking*, 9 August 2001.

[26] Emma Bell, *Gender and PRSPs: with experiences from Tanzania, Bolivia, Viet Nam and Mozambique*, BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, United Kingdom, 2003.